

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05
SY-05 MCT-01 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 (ISO) W
-----004752 132131Z /46

O R 291525Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8875
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY SANA
USINT HAVANA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 2886

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, ET
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT REVEALS NINE ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPTS MADE AGAINST PMAC CHAIRMAN SINCE SEPT 1976

SUMMARY: ETHIOPIAN MEDIA REPORTED JUNE 28 NINE ALLEGED ATTEMPTS
TO ASSASSINATE PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
(PMAC OR DIRG) CHAIRMAN LT. COL. MENGISTU HAILE-MARIAM. REPORTS
AVOIDED ANY ACCUSATIONS OF U.S., CIA AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES
AND WAS CAST IN TERMS OF INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE TO OUST MENGISTU.
FRANKNESS OF ANNOUNCEMENT MAY BE ONE FACET OF EFFORT TO GAIN
GREATER POPULAR SUPPORT FOR MENGISTU AND ALSO SERVE AS WARNING
TO POTENTIAL PLOTTERS THAT ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS WILL PROVE
FRUITLESS. END SUMMARY.

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1. ETHIOPIANS WERE ALERTED DURING MID-DAY NEWS BROAD-
CASTS JUNE 28 THAT MEDIA WOULD REVEAL THAT EVENING NINE
ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS MADE AGAINST DIRG CHAIRMAN MENGISTU.
REVELATIONS OF ACTUAL ATTEMPTS CONFIRMED GENERALLY TO
INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY, BUT ALSO
INCLUDED UNEXECUTED "PLOTS" TO KILL MENGISTU, WHICH

COUNTED AMONG NINE ATTEMPTS.

2. MOST PROMINENT EFFORT AGAINST MENGISTU, THAT OF SEPT 1976, WAS CALCULATED AS 5 ATTEMPTS (4 PLOTS AND ONE ACTUAL TRY). NEW DETAILS ABOUT SEPT INCIDENT PROVIDED BY MEDIA WERE: 4 VEHICLES INVOLVED IN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT; 4TH ARMY DIVISION GATES (WHICH ARE WITHIN 200 METERS OF ASSASSINATION SITE) WERE KEPT CLOSED TO MENGISTU'S LAND-ROVER THAT NIGHT AND HAD TO BE SMASHED IN; COL. ATNAFU ABATE (FORMER DIRG VICE-CHAIRMAN) AND HIS PARTY LEFT DIRG HQS. WITH MENGISTU GROUP THAT EVENING, BUT PARKED NEAR GHANDI HOSPITAL (HALF MILE FROM SITE) WHILE SHOOTING OCCURRED, AND DID NOT RELEASE FORMER'S ARMED SECURITY DETAIL TO AID MENGISTU AGAINST ASSASSINS; AND FINALLY, ATNAFU'S MEN DID NOT ATTEMPT TO APPREHEND ASSASSINS WHO ESCAPED PAST HOSPITAL.

3. OTHER 4 ATTEMPTS REVEALED BY MEDIA ALLEGEDLY WERE PLANNED TO OCCUR AT IDEOLOGY SCHOOL GRADUATION, HOLETA MILITARY TRAINING CENTER GRADUATION, NEAR INDIAN EMBASSY, AND NEAR AIRPORT ON BOLE ROAD (NO DATES WERE GIVEN). HOWEVER, NONE OF THESE REACHED FRUITION BECAUSE OF FORE-KNOWLEDGE BY SECURITY FORCES. EFFORT WAS MADE TO DIS-CREDIT ONCE AGAIN FORMER DIRG MEMBERS, CAPT. ALEMAYEHU HAILE AND CAPT. MOGES WOLDE-MICHAEL, WHO WERE EXECUTED WITH B. GEN. TEFERI BANTE IN FEBRUARY 1977. THEY WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCUSED OF ORGANIZING 4 EPRP OPERATIVES, INCLUDING KNOWN EPRP LEADER DR. TEFAYE DEBESSAY (KILLED IN MARCH 1977) TO ASSASSINATE MENGISTU.

4. ANNOUNCEMENT ALSO REVEALED NAMES OF 19 ASSASSINS WHO HAD BEEN ELIMINATED ALREADY, INCLUDING NUMBER OF ACTUAL EPRP MEMBERS, AND NAMES OF 3 "PAID ASSASSINS" WHO ARE BEING HELD FOR "TRIAL", INCLUDING ONE ELF MEMBER. ONE OF 19 PLOTTERS WHO ELIMINATED WAS FORMER DIRG MEMBER, CAPT. AMHA ABEBE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 2886

5. DETAILED REVELATIONS OF PAST HISTORY OF ATTEMPTS ON MENGISTU'S LIFE FOLLOWING CLOSELY ON FULL DISCLOSURE OF DIRG NEGOTIATION EFFORTS WITH ERITREAN SECESSIONISTS, SEEM SOMEWHAT PECULIAR. FACTS PRESENTED IN MEDIA APPEAR ACCURATE EVEN THOUGH ALEMAYEHU AND MOGES' ASSOCIATION WITH EPRP SLIGHTLY QUESTIONABLE. IT IS ALSO SOMEWHAT SURPRISING THAT NO WESTERN COUNTRIES ARE IMPLICATED IN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS, DESPITE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST U.S. AND CIA WHICH SURFACED PREVIOUSLY AT TIME OF SEPTEMBER 1976 ATTEMPT ON MENGISTU. ENTIRE ACCOUNT WAS ALMOST FREE OF IDEOLOGICAL RHETORIC AND WAS CAST MORE IN TERMS OF INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEM AND EFFORT TO OVERTHROW MENGISTU AS PILLAR OF THE REVOLUTION.

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6. SOME DIPLOMATS (SUDANESE AND EGYPTIANS) HAVE SPECULATED TO US THAT MENGISTU IS LAYING FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER PURGES WITHIN THE DIRG AND BUILDING UP TO HIS OWN INSTALLATION AS PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE BEING HEAD OF A SINGLE NATIONAL PARTY. HOWEVER, IT IS DOUBTFUL ANY PURGES WILL OCCUR BEFORE SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARY OF REVOLUTION OR THAT NATIONAL PARTY COULD BE FORMED BY THEN. REVELATIONS MAY ONLY BE PART OF EFFORT TO BOLSTER POPULAR SUPPORT FOR MENGISTU PRIOR TO MAJOR CAMPAIGN IN ERITREA AND DETERIORATING ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ADDIS ABABA AND COUNTRYSIDE.

7. IT IS CURIOUS THAT REVELATIONS OCCUR AT SAME TIME
THAT HEADS OF STATE OF BOTH YEMENS JUST ACROSS RED SEA
HAVE MET VIOLENT DEATHS ANND COULD BE SUBTLE MESSAGE TO
PLOTTERS THAT MENGISTU IS TOUGH NUT TO OVERTHROW. IT IS
ALSO PLEASANT TO NOTE THAT ETHIOPIANS DID NOT USE OCCASION TO
LAMBASTE U.S. AND CIA, WHICH HAVE BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED MANY
TIMES IN PAST FOR COLLABORATING WITH MENGISTU'S INTERNAL
ENEMIES. IN SUM, PUBLIC REVELATIONS ABOUT ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPTS ARE PUZZLING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ASSASSINATION, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ADDIS02886
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780287-1091
Format: TEL
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978069/aaaaahpf.tel
Line Count: 181
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 feb 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2469869
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT REVEALS NINE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS MADE AGAINST PMAC CHAIRMAN SINCE SEPT 1976
SUMMARY: ETHIOPIAN MEDIA REPORTED JUNE 28 NINE A LL
TAGS: PINS, ET, (MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/61cce390-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014